



Quarterly Report
MONTENEGRO: POLITICAL PARTY BUILDING AND
CIVIC DEVELOPMENT
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I. SUMMARY

Stalled Serb-Montenegrin negotiations and internal debates on the referendum process have dominated political headlines in Montenegro in the last quarter. Although the federal government adopted a platform for redefining relations between Montenegro and Serbia this summer, inter-republic negotiations on this platform and the Montenegrin government platform of December 2000 have been postponed due to President Djukanovic's unwillingness to accept the inclusion of representatives of the federal government. Debate on the referendum process in Montenegro continues as the ruling party attempts to reach a multiparty agreement on the formation of a "concentration" government to bring all parliamentary parties into a government that will prepare and conduct a referendum. The rest of the pro-independence coalition has criticized this proposal and has publicly pledged not to participate in a potential concentration government, while the pro-federation bloc has stipulated that Serb-Montenegrin negotiations must be completed before it will commit to a concentration government.

In this volatile environment, Montenegro's political leaders continue to require the skills to communicate with citizens and to create a political system that allows for informed and open debate. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is committed to supporting democratic reforms in Montenegro as it addresses the continued need for internal political liberalization. The long-term goal of NDI's Montenegro program is to strengthen Montenegro's emerging democratic political system through increased organizational capacity of and improved public outreach by political parties and through the initiation of direct participation in the political process by nongovernmental organizations as a means to promote civil society and broad-based citizen participation in political affairs.

NDI conducted the following activities this quarter:

- Organized a first-ever, multiparty conference for elected members of parliament (MPs);
- Conducted the second and third tracking political party polls in early July and September, respectively, and distributed key findings and party specific results;

- Provided technical assistance to its election monitoring partners, the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT) and the Association of Young Journalists (AYJ); and
- Provided training in a UNDP-sponsored program to 10 NGOs from the north on advocacy.

Specific results identified in this quarter include the following:

- Based on a multiparty seminar for elected members of parliament conducted by NDI in July, the Liberal Alliance in Montenegro (LSCG) party now holds caucus meetings every day. Within the Democratic Party of Socialists' (DPS) parliamentary club, MPs who are members of the municipal boards have been assigned to communicate party policy and accomplishments on a daily basis to other municipal board members.
- Leaders of the Socialist People's Party (SNP), the DPS, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the LSCG report that the NDI polling is invaluable – and not just because of information it provides on where the parties stand and how voters feel about the independence issue. The LSCG and the SNP both noted that they are using the results to hone their messages to target voters. The DPS and the SDP were interested in the economic issues that mattered most to voters and voter reaction to their initiatives.
- CDT released its final report on the April 2001 extraordinary parliamentary elections with concrete recommendations for changing the electoral framework in order to enhance voter confidence in the process.
- The AYJ was invited to join the government working group for designing a new law on public information and a new law on public broadcasting, which shows the credibility that the organization has established since it began working with NDI in 1999.

II. BACKGROUND

In early July, after two months of intense negotiations, the pro-independence coalition (the DPS and the SDP) formed a minority government with the support of the LSCG. The LSCG pledged its support for a year under the condition that the government organize a referendum on state status, which the government has pledged to do in early 2002.

However, there is no consensus among parties on a referendum law. Although the pro-independence coalition has the parliamentary majority needed to pass a new referendum law and call the vote, the DPS is hesitant to undertake such actions because the opposition “Together for Yugoslavia” coalition (the SNP, the People's Party (NS), and the Serb People's Party (SNS)) threatens to boycott the referendum unless it is involved with the oversight of its preparations and execution. Because the DPS realizes that a boycott will undermine internal and international legitimacy of any referendum outcome and that participation of the pro-federation coalition is crucial for the implementation of that outcome, the DPS has proposed creating a “concentration” government. Such a government would include the participation of all parliamentary parties in the preparation and conduct of the referendum. The LSCG and the SDP publicly criticized this

proposal and stated that they will not join because, suspicious of the SNP's motives for suggesting and supporting such a government, they fear it could be used as a mechanism for permanently delaying the referendum process. After a range of conflicting statements from the pro-federation coalition about the intention of the concentration government, the SNP recently announced that it wants to wait until the outcome of Serb-Montenegrin negotiations before signing onto a concentration government.

To date, even the beginning of Serb-Montenegrin negotiations is uncertain. Yugoslav Federal President Kostunica called off Serb-Montenegrin talks on the two platforms (one adopted by the federal government in August 2001 and another adopted by the Montenegrin government in December 2000) after President Djukanovic and Prime Minister Vujanovic refused to participate in an initial dialogue to which Federal Prime Minister Dragisa Pesic had been invited. Although the Montenegrin representatives support holding negotiations on Serb-Montenegrin relations, they insist that negotiations be held between Serbian and Montenegrin officials with President Kostunica (if he so desires) as the only representative of the federal government. In the official Montenegrin view, participation by a federal official would legitimize what Montenegro considers to be an illegitimate institution, which was elected based on illegally adopted amendments to the federal constitution and despite a Montenegrin government-organized boycott last year. President Kostunica is expected to announce in the coming weeks a new formula for inter-republic negotiations on future relations between Serbia and Montenegro.

In this political environment, NDI is conducting a program to strengthen Montenegro's emerging democratic political system through increased organizational capacity of and improved public outreach by political parties and through the initiation of direct participation in the political process by nongovernmental organizations as a means to promote civil society and broad-based citizen participation in political affairs.

The specific objectives of NDI's 2001 program are the following:

- Political parties begin to implement democratic forms of internal debate and decision-making;
- Political parties increase their direct contact with voters and solicit and respond to feedback from the grassroots on party positions;
- Party municipal branches and other functional units (i.e., women's groups, youth chapters, etc.) become more active in the life of the party;
- Parties become more open to the political participation of women and youth;
- Political parties improve the work of their caucuses inside parliament and more effectively integrate the caucus into general party activities including voter contact and media strategies;
- Political parties identify and respond to citizen priorities in their platforms and in their policies put forward either as parliamentary members of the government or opposition;
- Existing nonpartisan advocacy organizations become effective watchdog institutions and advocates for an accountable and transparent parliament and government.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Political Party Building

Political Parties in Parliament

The parliamentary elections of April 2001 reconfigured the Montenegrin Parliament: almost 40 percent of MPs are new and an increased proportion of them are women; one new parliamentary caucus (the SNS) was formed; and one caucus (the NS) nearly doubled in size. This newly configured parliament has a full agenda of reform priorities. In response to the expressed interest of MPs to improve their understanding of how parties work effectively in parliament and the role of MPs as legislators and public servants, NDI held a seminar “Strengthening Democracy through Parliamentary Clubs,” for all elected MPs in early July in Igalo.

The objectives of this seminar were the following:

- To provide MPs with a broader understanding of their complex roles as members of a party, members of a law-making body, representatives of voters, and coalition partners to other member parties in parliament;
- To introduce MPs to the skills which they need to organize themselves and their party groups/caucuses and the role that organization can play in making themselves more effective as legislators and representatives of their constituencies and parties; and
- To encourage interaction among MPs regardless of party affiliation and to give them the opportunity to understand that all parliamentarians face similar difficulties, not only parliamentarians in Montenegro, but also parliamentarians from other democracies.

Based on consultations with leaders of all the parties represented in parliament, the topics covered defining roles within parliamentary parties, establishing committees, improving party communications, and understanding rules of parliament. The following elected members of parliament participated in the seminar: Matyas Eorsi, Hungarian MP, Graham Steele, Canadian MP, and Enda Kenny, Irish MP. Additionally, NDI/Montenegro Director Niamh O’Connor, NDI/Banja Luka Director Shauna Martin, and NDI/Bulgaria Director Rick Asplund, moderated sessions and added their own insights as parliamentary experts from Ireland, Canada and the United States respectively. Out of a total of 77 MPs, 32 attended the seminar; all political parties were represented with the exception of the ethnic Albanian parties.

The seminar was the first-ever, multiparty parliamentary conference in Montenegro. It provided a unique experience for the MPs to network across party lines in an informal atmosphere for the first time. The seminar received high marks from all participants. The most highly rated sessions were those on party communications and constituency clinics, staff support and ethics in parliament.

Initial feedback, as indicated on the evaluation forms and during follow-up meetings with most party contacts, shows that MPs began to understand the complex roles and responsibilities that a parliamentarian possesses. MPs also stated that they valued the time to interact informally outside of the parliament because this interaction allowed them to realize that each faces similar difficulties. All attendees expressed interest in follow-on seminars in the future.

Political Party Polling

NDI fielded the second and third tracking surveys in each of Montenegro's 21 municipalities in late June and mid-September, respectively, to determine voters' attitudes toward independence, party-based messaging, Balkan and/or international issues, and Montenegrin affairs, including quality of life issues. A report on key findings was delivered to USAID and released to the media in Montenegro in early July and late September. NDI poll results in July garnered moderate media attention with radio and newspaper reports focusing on the economic findings of the poll. In September, NDI poll results received strong media attention from TV and radio stations and were covered on the front page of the independent daily *Vijesti* and in the opposition paper *Dan*. NDI briefed the leadership of LSCG, DPS, NS, SDP, and SNP on the key findings and on their specific voter universes so they could focus their communication on issues of importance to voters. Additionally, NDI sent the key findings by e-mail to the smaller parliamentary parties – SNS, Democratic Union of Albanians (DUA) and Democratic Alliance of Montenegro (DSCG).

Conducted in a period of political uncertainty, both polls exhibited growing voter uncertainty about the political process and its direction. For the third and fourth time, the polls showed that the most defining division of opinion among voters is based on a voter's ethnic identification – with Muslims being strongly enthusiastic about the Montenegrin government and its policies, Montenegrins, Croats, Albanians and others being mildly enthusiastic and Serbs being the most pessimistic about the policies of the governing majority. And, for the fourth time, the economy continued to be the most important issue for voters when deciding for whom to vote.

The September survey enabled NDI to review a six-month period of public opinion. The Institute noticed a 10 percent decline in support for “independence,” a 15 to 20 percent decline in trust for the pro-independence leadership and republican institutions, and increased concern about individual economic security. Since the summer had been full of government, parliamentary and federal parliamentary/governmental activity, the September survey asked voters about their awareness of specific initiatives and their trust about whether they would be implemented and yield results. Although respondents were knowledgeable about the initiatives, especially the campaign against the gray market economy and mass voucher privatization, no more than 50 percent believed that any of the offered initiatives would yield results.

NGO Development

Center for Democratic Transition (CDT)

CDT Report on Elections

NDI worked with CDT to draft concrete legal recommendations for amendments to the election framework based on CDT's observation of the April 2001 parliamentary elections. CDT released the final report in early September, which describes its activities and details the flaws of the Law on the Election of Councilors and Representatives. Some of the recommendations advocated by CDT include: a change in the provision that allows political party leaders to change the order of the candidate list after the elections; improved legal specifications regarding the timing and procedures to be followed when elections are annulled; and addressing the ambiguity in the method of apportioning parliamentary seats to the ethnic Albanian district. CDT also notes that the Law on Financing of Political Parties needs to be revised to include specific provisions mandating the disclosure of campaign contributions.

Transparency of Parliament

Demonstrating CDT's growing ability to raise its own funds, CDT was awarded grants from the National Endowment for Democracy and USAID/OTI for a program to promote the transparency of parliament and to educate citizens about its functions. During the past several months, NDI has worked with CDT on planning of this program as part of the Institute's goal to strengthen the country's political system by promoting citizen political participation.

At present, CDT is working to finalize a 10-question man-on-the-street-poll to see how much citizens know about the functioning of parliament. In addition, CDT is working on a citizen's guide to parliament to be distributed throughout the country. Through a variety of comparative documents produced by NDI from its programs around the world, the Institute provided valuable comparative examples that have contributed to CDT's design. In the next quarter, CDT will present a draft of its citizen's guide to the parliamentary leadership to check its accuracy. CDT is also negotiating with the speaker of the Assembly to see if citizen tours of the parliament would be permissible. The initial idea is to organize these tours for students of the various faculties of the University of Podgorica in order to educate and raise their awareness of the parliament's functioning.

Association of Young Journalists (AYJ)

During this quarter, NDI continued to hold consultations with AYJ and provide support for its numerous activities, including AYJ's participation in the government working group that will draft a new broadcast media law. In the working group AYJ will focus on the composition of the bodies in charge of supervising the public media (controlling bodies) and they will argue that party representatives should not be a part of the controlling bodies. While USAID-funded ProMedia/IREX best delivers advice on the specific provisions of this section of the law, NDI's advisory role is in the area of effective advocacy.

NGO Advocacy

In early and late August, NDI provided training on advocacy for 10 NGOs in the northern municipalities through a UNDP-sponsored program. NDI agreed to participate because the

program furthered NDI's objective to assist existing nonpartisan advocacy organizations to become effective watchdog institutions and advocates for an accountable and transparent parliament and government. NDI's contribution was limited to delivering training during the two two-day seminars; UNDP identified and paid for the participation of the NGOs and other trainers in the seminars. It was hoped that NGOs in the north would increase their understanding of civic involvement and advocacy and their project planning and implementation skills so that they could engage effectively in holding government accountable. Three staff members of NDI's civic partner, the Center for the Development of the NGOs (CRNVO), also participated as facilitators.

The aims of the first two-day training seminar were to increase participant understanding of the role of a strong civil society in achieving good governance practices, increase understanding of the role of NGOs in improving government (central and municipal) policies and practices, advance NGO skills in advocacy and increase understanding of the importance of good cooperation within the NGO community and with government structures. The objectives of the second training were to improve project planning skills, improve advocacy skills using concrete ideas for action, explore models of cooperation with government, apply the themes covered in the first phase to the needs of each particular NGO, and discuss the project proposals from the NGOs to be submitted to the UNDP.

In addition to teaching the NGOs about a multi step process of advocacy planning, NDI emphasized the need to involve competent government institutions constructively in the resolution of their problem, identify the official representative who can solve the community's problem and design activities related to influencing this individual. In the next quarter, the NGOs will receive funding from the UNDP to implement projects for community improvement and advocacy. The effective implementation of these programs will show the value of NDI's contribution.

AYJ and CDT Cooperative Training

On September 6 and 7 NDI/Kosovo brought Kosovo Action for Civic Initiatives (KACI) leaders together to develop their plans for monitoring the upcoming November elections. In addition to trainers from the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID), representatives from CDT and AYJ provided valuable insights into election related issues. CDT discussed election monitoring by describing methods to determine the number of polling stations to monitor, setting attainable volunteer goals and developing effective training plans. AYJ talked about the methodology it uses in monitoring the media on a weekly basis in pre-election periods.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This summer quarter provided an opportunity for the NDI/Montenegro team to contact its political party interlocutors to begin a review of the results and accomplishments of the program. Listed below are the results and accomplishments related specifically to the current reporting period. A comprehensive list of all results and accomplishments witnessed to date based on training and consultations since the beginning of the grant period will be submitted in a separate document.

Objective: Political parties increase their direct contact with voters and solicit feedback from the grassroots on party positions.

- With the establishment of the new government, DPS and SDP ministers declared Wednesdays to be “citizens’ days” – all ministers are available in their offices on Wednesdays to talk with citizens.

Objective: Political parties begin to implement effective democratic forms of internal debate and decision-making.

- DPS appointed seven members of the executive board to be in charge of communication with three municipal branches each.
- Prior to the October 6, 2001, 4th Party Congress, the DPS issued a report on the state of the party organization, acknowledging that in the last four years there has been a lack of interaction between the ministers and presidents of municipal boards and local party branches. Due to NDI training for municipal branch leadership on its role in relationship to the party headquarters (and the attendance of Executive Board members at these training events), the party understands that its internal communications to date are weak. In the near future, NDI will be able to work with the party to augment and improve its two-way internal communication.
- Within the DPS parliamentary club, MPs who are members of the municipal boards have been assigned the responsibility to communicate party policy and accomplishments on a daily basis to other municipal board members.

Objective: Parties become more open to the political participation of women and youth.

- During the October 6, 2001, 4th Party Congress, the DPS is expected to include an amendment in the party statutes officially recognizing the Youth Council as an organ within the party. The DPS established a Youth Council in 1998 and has been working since 1999 on creating a youth club in each municipal branch. NDI worked intensively for three months in 1999 with the Podgorica youth club. During that time, NDI discussed the role of the Youth Council and discussed specific intra-party advocacy efforts that could be employed to formally recognize the role of the Youth Council within the party – an interest of the Podgorica youth club.

Objective: Political parties improve the work of their caucuses inside parliament and more effectively integrate the caucus into general party activities including voter contact and media strategies.

- Based on NDI’s multiparty seminar for elected members of parliament in July, the LSCG now holds caucus meetings every day. Within the DPS parliamentary club,

MPs who are members of the municipal boards have been assigned to communicate party policy and accomplishments on a daily basis to other municipal board members.

Objective: Political parties identify and respond to citizen priorities in their platforms and policies put forward either as members of the government or opposition.

- Leaders of the SNP, DPS, SDP and LSCG report that NDI's polling is invaluable – and not just because of information it provides on where the parties stand and how voters feel about the independence issue. The LSCG and the SNP both noted that they are using the results to hone their messages to target voters. The DPS and the SDP were interested in the economic issues that mattered most to voters and the voter reaction to their initiatives.
- The leadership of each of the parties is beginning to exhibit a better understanding of the utility of polling information as evidenced by the high-level participation in the briefings (with the exception of the NS), lengthier briefings with more interaction and requests for explanations, and more targeted questions and a focus on the issues in the individual party briefings. In September, the DPS and the SDP requested additional analysis on several issues of interest in an effort to understand better their electorate's opinion.

Objective: Existing nonpartisan advocacy organizations become effective watchdog institutions and advocates for an accountable and transparent parliament and government.

- CDT released its final report on the April 2001 extraordinary parliamentary elections with concrete recommendations for changing the electoral framework in order to enhance voter confidence in the process.
- The AYJ was invited to join the government working group for designing a new law on public information and a new law on public broadcasting, which shows the credibility that the organization has established since it began working with NDI in 1999.

V. EVALUATION

NDI's political party program continues to bear fruit in spite of the tumultuous nine months which included a government collapse, prolonged negotiations to schedule a date for new elections, lengthy negotiations to form a new government, and circular discussions about a potential referendum. NDI's survey of its political party partners demonstrated significant changes in the way parties operated during the previous election cycles, particularly in getting key parties to recognize the importance of implementing voter identification techniques, media strategy and constituency outreach methods. Political parties are also undertaking initiatives to communicate with youth and women by including them in party decisionmaking and structures.

Multiparty Seminar for MPs

The “Strengthening Democracy Through Parliamentary Clubs” seminar was the first in a series of training sessions with the MPs that will be conducted throughout the year and beyond. It is also the first time that NDI/Montenegro worked with the party caucuses as a unit. Although the number of participants was less than anticipated, all parties except the two Albanian parties, were represented. Vesna Perovic, the speaker of the Montenegrin parliament, showed her support for the seminar by attending a part of the session on one day.

Polling

The main purpose of the ongoing polling is to demonstrate to political parties the utility of strategic polling as a tool to gauge and better respond to the interests and concerns of voters. NDI planned to complete a baseline and seven tracking polls by the end of the year on the basis of a tight electoral schedule but was unable to do so given the protracted negotiations on a formation of the new government and lengthy discussions about a potential referendum. NDI will look to complete the remaining three tracking polls at appropriate intervals in the coming months, which will provide NDI and the parties with one year of solid data showing that, regardless of political developments on state-status, the most important issue for the average Montenegrin voter continues to be his/her economic status and standard of living. NDI will discuss the possibility of a no-cost extension with USAID.

Based on the four polls that NDI has conducted since March, NDI notes that the parties are using the results to target their public messages more effectively. It is hard to say, however, whether party platforms or policies can really be changed at this moment in time. Platforms are documents that offer a policy statement for each and every responsibility of the republic government. These documents are not widely read and are not differentiated among parties. Moreover, in the current atmosphere dominated by the unresolved issue of Montenegro’s state status, “policy” essentially boils down to pro-independence or pro-federation. It is hoped that, when Montenegro’s state status is finally resolved, the parties will begin to differentiate themselves ideologically and be able to use the issue-specific results produced by the polls more effectively.

The inclusion in the September survey of the political initiatives – and, voter awareness of these initiatives and faith that they would yield results – were particularly interesting for both governing and opposition parties. This question was never used before because, prior to now, there have been few political initiatives to test. Now, the parties seem to understand their policy role: the need to have policies and initiatives and to pursue them, rather than to always react to the initiatives of the major governing party. That is, one must figure out what type of power one has – be it parliamentary control or executive control – and use it. In addition, with the September survey, there was evidence that the reliability and subject of the NDI polls are of interest to a growing audience of key decision makers as evidenced by first-time requests for copies of the key

findings from the offices of the vice prime minister for political relations and the speaker of parliament.

NGO Development

As a result of NDI's cooperation with UNDP, 10 NGOs (and 30 individuals) from the much-neglected northern part of Montenegro have the introductory skills necessary to engage in advocacy and/or watchdog functions as NGOs. NDI plans to follow the work of these NGOs to track their utilization of these skills and the impact they have on society in the north and throughout the republic.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In the coming months, NDI envisions conducting the activities outlined below. However, these activities will depend on developments on the Serb/Montenegrin negotiations, which could lead either to the scheduling of a referendum or the calling of a federal election.

Political Party Building:

- NDI hopes to engage more systematically with youth and women's organizations in the parties to open greater citizen participation. NDI will address this objective by holding a women's seminar in November with political and civic activists.
- NDI plans to complete the fourth tracking poll in November and brief relevant actors including political parties, USAID, and the Montenegrin public. Depending on political developments, NDI may try to organize a fifth tracking poll in December.
- Given staff availability and political developments, NDI would look to try to build on its work with the parties in parliament by organizing several individual workshops for the parties on parliamentary party caucus organization.

NGO Advocacy:

- During the next quarter, NDI will work with AYJ, CDT and CRNVO to strengthen their organizational and outreach capabilities. In addition, NDI will continue to assist CDT in implementing its parliamentary program focusing on monitoring and oversight activities.